

Door Still Open on U-2 Flights, Turks Say

Ankara Waiting for Verification Sections of SALT to Be Clarified

BY LOUIS B. FLEMING

Times Staff Writer

ANKARA, Turkey—American U-2 flights over Turkey to verify Soviet compliance with the new strategic arms limitation treaty remain a possibility despite earlier reports that Turkey might not permit them, according to a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here.

Turkey will not consider approval of the flights, however, until the Soviet Union clarifies its interpretation of the treaty verification provisions, it was noted.

Turkish officials indicated that they are mystified by the absence of information from the United States after press reports said that there had been consultations on the matter between President Carter and Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev at Vienna last month.

But the door is still open, and the flights, according to officials here, remain essential to enforcement of the

SALT II treaty.

The June 23 vote in the U.S. House of Representatives opposing a \$50 million grant of military assistance to Turkey provoked a strong reaction here. Some of the statements issued seemed to say that Turkey would prohibit the overflights.

Part of the confusion was stirred by press reports of comments by Gen. Kenan Evren, the Turkish armed forces chief of staff. But officials here say his first response was based on misinformation given him by reporters regarding the U.S. congressional action and, since then, he and other officials have indicated that Turkey is keeping an open mind on the matter.

"We are not waiting for Soviet approval either," one official said, smarting at accusations that Turkey had yielded its sovereignty to Moscow on the matter.

What the Turks want is assurance that the U-2 flights fall within the treaty provisions for national techni-

cal means of verification.

The Turks now suspect that the silence from Washington means that the Soviet Union does not agree with the American interpretation.

"Our assumption is that something will be done in the Senate on the treaty, a statement of understanding or something else, to force the Soviet Union into acceptance of the flights," one Turkish official said.

Soviet acceptance of the American interpretation will not mean automatic Turkish approval but, as one official said, "We want to support SALT."

The issue of the U-2 overflights has done nothing to smooth Turkish-American relations, which were severely strained by the arms embargo that ended in September. The embargo was imposed after Turkey used U.S.-supplied weapons and equipment in its 1974 invasion of Cyprus.

"We were not pleased to learn about the U-2 in the press," one Turkish official said.

The U.S. Embassy here told the Foreign Ministry about the proposal at the end of March. There are differences of recollection as to whether the official notification came before or after the first press leaks.

This new controversy developed just as critical negotiations were getting under way on a five-year U.S.-Turkey mutual cooperation agreement that includes provisions for continued operation of three important joint operations in Turkey, a major North Atlantic Treaty Organization air base and two intelligence-gathering facilities that in themselves could play a role in policing the SALT II agreement.

A one-year agreement on operation of the facilities expires Oct. 9, five days before elections that could bring about a change of government here. The U-2 debate could be back on the front pages at that time, making both issues vulnerable to strong political pressures.

Some Turkey officials are confident that the mutual cooperation agreement can be completed before the election, but some Americans are less optimistic. The remaining differences do not appear to be fundamental but a lot of details remain to be resolved.

The negotiations for the agreement are more complicated this time be-



cause joint military and economic agreements are being done as a single package, including provisions for modernization of the Turkish armed forces, coproduction of more arms within Turkey and economic assistance.

House opposition to the \$50 million grant in military assistance has troubled the Turks and has been widely interpreted here as another example of the power of the Greek lobby on Capitol Hill.

The Turks argue that they need grants as well as credits for two reasons: (1) the Turkish financial situation remains grave and (2) grant legislation opens the way to additional surplus weapons from the United

States.

There appears to be little doubt that Congress will approve a record aid package for Turkey regardless of the outcome of the grant question. Approval is expected of a program to provide close to \$1 billion over the next two years, a level of assistance exceeded only by the aid for Israel and Egypt.

CONTINUED

Turkey is watching the handling of the Middle East aid programs with particular interest because of provisions to excuse repayment of up to 50% of the credits. In the long run Turkey hopes the same provisions will be applied to it.

There is deep concern in the NATO command about the state of the Turkish armed forces, which are desperately in need of modernization. Many of the basic weapons are of World War II and the Korean War vintage, weakening Turkey's defense capability at the eastern extremity of the alliance.

Officials here scoff at reports that a substitute can be found for the U-2 flights in the first years of the SALT verification program. Since loss of the listening posts in Iran, there is no present substitute for telemetering the first 30 seconds of flight of weapons launched in the Soviet test program, it is stated here.